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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: FOUR KILLED IN ABKHAZIA BLAST

REF: A. TBILISI 1141
[B](#). TBILISI 1152
[C](#). TBILISI 1160
[D](#). TBILISI 1161

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (C) Summary and Comment: On the evening of July 6, a powerful explosion ripped through a cafe in the city of Gali, killing four, including the de-facto chief of state security for Gali, Major Muratia, and an off-duty UN interpreter. Ten others, including another UN interpreter, were wounded. The explosion occurred following a series of four small explosions the morning of July 6 on the Georgian side of the cease-fire line along the M-27 highway near the Enguri bridge, reportedly hitting the car of the Georgian deputy police chief. The United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG) reported that no injuries resulted from the blast, and damage to the road was minimal. UNOMIG also reports that the Enguri bridge has reopened to civilian traffic (refs A&B), though locals need to show a Russian passport or a local Abkhaz ID card to pass. Separately, Irakli Tsanava, leader of the Georgian-backed government in Upper Abkhazia, accused the Russians of bringing in an additional 45 trainloads of weapons, including tanks and anti-aircraft guns, into Abkhazia. UNOMIG confirmed that the CIS PKF is currently conducting a swap of its BTR armored personnel carriers, but could not confirm reports of additional heavy equipment entering Abkhazia.

[2](#). (C) Summary and Comment continued: The situation in South Ossetia was calm despite sporadic firefights over the weekend following a series of attacks and reprisals on July 3 that killed South Ossetian de-facto police chief Nodar Bibilov and targeted the motorcade of Dmitry Sanakoyev, leader of the Georgian-backed temporary administrative unit of South Ossetia (ref D). Georgian media reported that two people were killed and 10 wounded following a mortar attack on the evening of July 3 on Tskhinvali, the capital of the breakaway republic of South Ossetia. OSCE monitors confirmed that three people were wounded in the attack, but could not confirm any fatalities. Shooting was also reported near the Georgian villages of Nuli and Kekhvi early on July 5, but there were no casualties. The incidents in both conflict zones have further increased tensions in the region by fueling a string of attacks and retributory counter-attacks that could easily push the sides into open conflict. Particularly troubling is the recent increase in the number and frequency of bomb and IED explosions targeting both Georgian and de-facto officials, and the use of explosives apparently to create fear among local civilians. Such tactics, which were widespread prior to Saakashvili's election in 2004, could mark the beginning of a new and dangerous stage where elements from both sides settle scores using terrorist tactics. We are actively and strongly condemning these acts (ref C) and the Ambassador spoke again with Foreign Minister Tkeshelashvili on July 7 to further reinforce our message that these attacks stop. End Summary and Comment.

Gali Security Chief killed by blast

[3](#). (C) On the evening of July 6, the ethnic Abkhaz Gali

de-facto state security chief, Major Muratia, was killed by an explosion at the opening of a new cafe in the predominantly ethnic-Georgia city of Gali in Abkhazia. The blast also killed an off-duty UN interpreter, a member of the Abkhaz state security service and a local civilian. Ten others were wounded, including another UN interpreter. Abkhaz de-facto president Sergei Bagapsh accused the Georgian government of engaging in "state terrorism," saying that the Gali blast was the latest in a chain of "terrorist acts" targeting de-facto leaders. Georgian government officials denied any involvement in the blast, with Georgian Deputy Interior Minister Shota Utiashvili calling Bagapsh's claims "absurd and groundless." The cafe explosion followed a series of four blasts earlier that morning along the M-27 highway near the Georgian village of Rukhi. UNOMIG reports that the explosives detonated in a timed series, with the third and fourth explosions occurring simultaneously approximately 10 minutes after the second explosion, in an apparent attempt to target the first responders on the scene.

No injuries were reported, though the car belonging to the Georgian deputy police chief for Zugdidi, Napoleon Partsvania, was damaged as he attempted to secure the area following the first two blasts. All four explosions are believed to have been from 60-82mm mortar rounds used as Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) planted along the road.

14. (C) UNOMIG reports that the main administrative boundary crossing between Georgia and Abkhazia along the Enguri bridge has reopened to civilian traffic. Abkhaz militia are requiring civilians traveling to Gali to have either a Russian passport or a "Form 9" refugee ID card to cross. Separately, Irakli Tsanava, leader of the Georgian-backed government in Upper Abkhazia, accused the Russians of bringing in an additional 45 trainloads of weapons, including tanks, BTR armored personnel carriers, anti-aircraft guns and radar, into Abkhazia. UNOMIG confirmed that the CIS PKF were currently conducting a swap of BTRs on a one-for-one basis, but could not confirm reports that additional heavy equipment was entering Abkhazia.

South Ossetia calm but tense following attacks

15. (C) The situation in South Ossetia is currently calm following a series of attacks and reprisals on July 3-4 targeting Georgian and South Ossetian officials (ref C). Georgian media reported that two people were killed and 10 wounded in a mortar attack on Tskhinvali on the night of July 3, several hours after the attack on Sanakoyev's motorcade (ref D). OSCE monitors confirmed that three persons were wounded in the attack, and its investigation into the incident was unable to determine the origin of the attack. Subsequent gunfire was reported in the Georgian villages of Nuli and Kekhvi early on July 5, but there were no casualties. Following the attack on Sanakoyev, the Georgian government temporarily withdrew its peacekeepers from the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF) command center in Tskhinvali to the Georgian village of Nikozi, shortly before the shelling of Tskhinvali began. Several rounds exploded near the JPKF command center, fueling speculation among the Russian and South Ossetian peacekeepers that the Georgian peacekeepers knew about the attack in advance and withdrew to safety beforehand. (Comment: OSCE has no evidence of Georgian participation in the attacks or that the Georgian PKF knew about the attack in advance, but expressed concern that the Russian and South Ossetian suspicions will poison the atmosphere of trust that had been developing between the members of the JPKF prior to the latest incidents. End comment).

16. (C) Following the events of July 3-4, Georgian media reported accusations from both sides concerning the movement of additional heavy military equipment into the security zone. OSCE is currently investigating reports that the South Ossetians have brought in four D40 howitzers, 11 BMP armored personnel carriers and six ZU-23 anti-aircraft guns into the zone. South Ossetian de-facto interior minister Mikheil Mindzayev also accused Georgia of bringing in heavy military hardware to "bomb" residential areas. OSCE confirmed the

presence of two new Georgian BMPs armed with ZU-23 anti-aircraft guns (Note: the ZU-23, when mounted on a BMP, can be used to target ground forces and is considered a heavy weapon. End note). OSCE reported on July 7 that the Georgians were in the process of withdrawing the two ZU-23-armed BMPs, which are considered heavy weaponry and thus in violation of the cease-fire agreement.

TEFFT